

Oman WTO Session
Why Accession Is Important Now?

Thank you for the opportunity and honor to participate in this important program. And to join this panel of such distinguished contributors to the multilateral trading system.

Congratulations to Oman on this anniversary of its accession to the WTO. The WTO has benefitted from your constructive engagement in the work of the institution. We look forward to your continued contributions as WTO strives to meet the many challenges facing the international trading system. And the U.S, is grateful to Oman as the first Arab country to recognize the young United States in the early 19th century. Thanks for helping us get started then.

I also want to say what an honor is it to be on this program with Arif Hussain. He is one of the unsung heroes of the international trading system. By that I mean that he has done so much to enable countries to benefit from international trade by bringing them into the world trading system through membership in the WTO. Through the accession process---which certainly is a challenging one---these countries have made the necessary policy changes to become players in the global economy. Also, congratulations to Minister Akram for shepherding Oman's accession process.

The thrust of my presentation today can be expressed in one sentence:

a case filed by another Member and add its claims to the existing case.

- **Domestic Economic Reform:** There are conditions for joining the WTO, and they are negotiated with current Members. The requirements are not the same for every member. Major trading countries face stiffer requirements than smaller or less-developed economies. But conditions can provide justification for internal economic reforms that otherwise may be politically difficult but highly desirable. For example, improved customs procedures, such as customs valuation, may yield significantly higher revenues from imports. And WTO and related organizations stand ready to help implement such reforms.
- **Eligible for FTAs:** As a practical matter, failure to belong to the WTO rules out the opportunity to participate in a free trade agreement. Without the credibility for fair play and predictable treatment that is validated by WTO membership, a country simply is not going to be considered seriously for partnership in an FTA.
 - Certainly the U.S. never would have considered negotiating an FTA with Bahrain, Jordan or Oman if they had not been members of the WTO.
- **Other international Trade Bodies:** Without WTO membership, countries rule themselves out of consideration for other international trade for a, e.g., OECD, G-20, APEC.

Conclusion

- The past several years have been difficult ones for the WTO, not least because of c

incoming leadership in the US, we should turn our sights toward creating opportunities for the entire membership to redeem the faith that countries placed in the organization when they acceded to it.